



SAND // SNOW

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Abstract

This master's thesis explores the question of: how does one create a sense of home in multiple and different places and cultures? By studying, in depth, my experience of homing myself within a foreign culture, while trying to understand what retains that underlying connection to my native culture. The research was motivated by a strong desire to understand what constitutes home for people who lead a, somewhat, nomadic existence. The concept of nomadism within the thesis is defined by the relationship between movement and place and situated within a context of privileged movement. Within the thesis, moving and nomadism are always approached from a prosperous Western background where movement is a positive experience and conscious choice.

The thesis utilises autoethnography and arts-based research, consisting of embodied writing and embroidery, to investigate the ways in which I foster a sense of familiarity and home, mainly within Newcastle, Australia and Helsinki, Finland.

The data is constituted by embodied stories and embroidered works that communicate, inform and interact with each other in order to convey a deeper enquiry and understanding of my homing process. The interplay between the embodied experience made visual through the embroidery and the embodied experience articulated by the stories are equally important. Both types of embodiment produce different knowledge. The stories communicate embodied experiences which have been processed, understood and reflected upon after knowledge had already formed. While the embroideries reflect an in-the-moment knowing where tacit knowledge and intuition were relied upon to create works that examine the key components of each embodied experience. By combining autoethnography and arts-based research, I dissect thought patterns and processes which occur intuitively within me in order to make them communicable and relevant to others.

The research findings acknowledge that home will always be an individual human experience, as no two people will ever home themselves in exactly the same way. However, in a world where movement, mobility and nomadism are becoming the norm, it is important to understand the numerous ways in which home is created, felt and lived.

Keywords home, contemporary nomadism, autoethnography, arts-based research

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SAND // SNOW:
AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC
INVESTIGATION OF
A HOMING PROCESS

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PRELUDE

16.12.2015, 17:02, HELSINKI-VANTAA AIRPORT, FINLAND

The passport control officer stares at my passport and then at me, back at my passport and then at me, back at my passport and then back at me. I begin to grow nervous as he holds my eye contact. I feel myself begin to smirk.

"You look somewhat different," the officer says.

"Well, that passport is almost seven years old," I explain.

"Do you live here?" he asks me, looking a little suspicious and confused.

I switch to Finnish and answer somewhat haltingly, "*Joo. Mä oon asunut Helsingissä viisi vuotta. Tarvisetko nähdä mun oleskelulupa?*" (Yeah. I have lived in Helsinki for five years. Do you need to see my residence permit?)"

"Please!" he replies rather enthusiastically.

I produce my permit and he begins studying it instead of my passport, interspersed with small talk in Finnish.

"*Niin, Australiasta Suomeen?*" (So, from Australia to Finland?)"

"*Joo* (Yeah)," I answer, stumbling for something more to say without switching to English.

"*Nyt on aika pimeää* (It's a little dark now)" he laments.

"But not at home!" I gush. And there it is, that word again... home. It rolls off my tongue seemingly so easily that no one would ever guess at the tension in which the word is steeped.

Home is a concept that has monopolised my thoughts. In the seven years since leaving Australia, I have experienced an odd tension when trying to conceptualise and understand home. A tension that raises, but then refuses to answer, a plethora of questions such as: Is home a physical place or a mental creation, a state-of-mind, so to speak? Does home exist only in my memory, or is it purely constructed from my memories? And, is it possible to have two homes?

My wandering mind is brought back to reality, as the passport control officer continues with his, mostly one-sided, conversation.

"Vietätkö Joulun Australiassa? (Will you spend Christmas in Australia?)"

"Joo (Yeah)," one more monosyllabic answer.

He finally hands me both my passport and residence permit, *"Hyvää matkaa! (Have a good trip!)"*

"Kiitos (Thanks)" I mumble as I slink off through the border gates.

17.12.2015, 15:37, SUVARNABHUMI AIRPORT TRANSIT HOTEL, THAILAND

It seems to me as if transit is a very fitting word to describe the half space I now occupy. Not quite here and not yet there. Where am I? Obviously I am physically in Bangkok, Thailand, but mentally? Emotionally? In terms of time zones and body clocks, where am I?

I am in a liminal space.

I have been thinking about this long journey back to my native country as a physical manifestation of the homing process that takes place within me everyday. An embodied and rather sensory, living through of the space between Finland and Australia. An experience fraught with jet lag, sweat, cramps, hunger and bone-breaking weariness but also excitement, anticipation and longing.

INTRODUCTION

This master's thesis is an arts-based and autoethnographic investigation into the on-going experience of homing myself within foreign countries and cultures. By subjecting my personal experiences and memories to scrutiny via artistic research processes such as embodied writing and embroidery, I am aiming to gain a deeper insight into the ways in which I construct a sense of home and familiarity, within a foreign culture, while trying to understand what retains that underlying connection to my native culture. This research topic and process has been inspired by an active desire to understand what constitutes home, especially for someone like myself, who leads a, somewhat, nomadic existence.

I believe that through both the embodied process of hand-writing stories and making embroidered pieces, one is given the space to contemplate and feel, both with their mind and within their body, the transformation they have gone through in order to home themselves in a foreign country or culture. I feel that in a world where people are increasingly displaced, but also, increasingly expected to be perfect cosmopolitans - happy to move across the world at the drop of a hat for, for example, a job or better study opportunities, it is important for people to understand how others home themselves in unfamiliar places. How people weave together remnants of an old life with an emerging one.

This being an autoethnographical investigation it dissects my individual journey from one affluent Western country to others. It is a singular experience and therefore, cannot speak to the millions of immigrant narratives all over the world. I was not forced to leave Australia, I have not been displaced, I can return safely whenever I feel. My current status in Finland is also relatively stable. I am in as privileged a position as an expatriate can be. It is with this privilege in mind that I communicate my research process and findings.

FROM COAL AND BEACHES

I have lived abroad for approximately the last seven years. Away from my country of birth - the only country, of which, I am currently a citizen and the only country, previous to departure, I had experienced living in. I moved away from Australia in the September of 2009, bound for Manchester, England, where I had a casual teaching position and a working/holiday visa waiting. I was 23 at the time, and had not long graduated from a Diploma of Secondary Education. A significant and long term relationship had, also, recently ended and I was feeling a little listless and fenced in by my home town.

Newcastle is on the east coast of Australia, 162 kilometres north of Sydney in an area known as the Hunter. It is an ex-industrial town, although it still “boasts” a coal exporting harbour and many residents earn a living “in the mines.” It is a beautiful

city however, with some of the best surf beaches in the country (and quite possibly the world), but, in my opinion, the city suffers terribly from small-town syndrome. It is a decent sized city with a population of 550,000, yet it feels like a small country town. Everyone knows everyone and six degrees of separation is a gross over estimate in relation to social connections in Newcastle.

As my departure crept ever closer, the idea of finding a teaching position and therefore settling in Newcastle, began to fill me with the strongest sense of suffocation and claustrophobia. I needed to get out and experience the world and Manchester seemed as good a destination as any. However, over the 18 months that I lived and worked in that city, it became glaringly apparent that Manchester was, in fact, not as good a place as any. I did not feel comfortable there, it did not feel like home. Thus, in January 2011, in the middle of a particularly cold and snowy winter, I relocated to Helsinki, Finland.

COMING TO HOME THROUGH THE AWAY

The topic of my thesis research evolved rather organically. Last spring (January 2015 - August 2015) I spent a semester studying at Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm, Sweden. While there I completed a mini ethnography project that investigated how the other exchange students were getting to know their new surroundings and starting to make themselves feel at home in an unfamiliar country. The project process acted as a catalyst to start me thinking more deeply about my own experiences of living as an immigrant, especially in Finland. I started to wonder: why have I stayed in Helsinki for so long? What is it about Helsinki that keeps me here? (As opposed to Manchester which I moved on from or Stockholm where I lived for a defined exchange period?) I began to seriously ask myself: how do I feel at home? What is home? Is it possible to simultaneously have more than one home? And do I practice homing in the same way in different places? These queries lead to the development of my research question: how does one create a sense of home in multiple and different places and cultures?

WHAT IS TO COME

The following thesis explores experiences and memories I have gained while living abroad for the last seven years. The research consists of autoethnographic enquiry in the form of embodied writing paired with embroidered pieces which inform, support and highlight key components from the stories. These stories purposefully employ the style of embodied writing, as a research method, and are distinct from other writing styles within this thesis. Both the written and embroidered elements focus

primarily upon snippets of my life in Helsinki, Finland and Newcastle, Australia and the ways in which I experience a sense of home and familiarity within both cultures. However, throughout this thesis I also occasionally refer to time I spent living in Manchester, England and Stockholm, Sweden.

The *Theory* chapter helps to contextualise this thesis by placing my research within the scope of how others define a sense of home. The process of writing the chapter also helped me to clarify my own ideas and concepts about my experience of home in relation to how others have experienced the same phenomenon. I also explain the ways in which phenomenology, time and contemporary nomadism are theoretically relevant to this thesis. The *Methodology* chapter describes the methods used to investigate my research problem i.e. autoethnography and arts-based research. I chose to combine these two methods because the phenomenon of home is, in my opinion, highly subjective whilst at the same time an intrinsic human experience. Therefore, exploring the wider phenomenon via my personal experiences and the process of making, seemed apt. The *Story - words and pictures* chapter presents all my data: six embodied stories and eight embroidered works, and explains in detail the creation process behind each work. Then, in the *Interpretation - home as* chapter my research findings are organised into three sections: senses, memories and communication. I then analyse the data by building and expanding upon these three categories. The *Interpretation - home as* chapter also acknowledges that there is a loose timeline running through this entire thesis, consisting of memories, experiences and work created before, during and after my most recent visit to Australia (December 2015 - February 2016). This visit constituted the longest amount of time I have spent in Australia since my initial departure, and also happened to align with my research making time. The visit also helped to consolidate and illuminate some of my preliminary research findings.

Journal entries written at various times during the aforementioned visit (to Australia), visible predominantly in the *Prelude*, two *Interludes* and a *Postlude*, also flesh out this thesis and add to the sense of a timeline. These journal entries are not part of my data, rather, they are explorations of what I was thinking, feeling and generally experiencing. They help to articulate various aspects of my multifaceted relationship with home and they also act as a way to further illustrate certain points in this thesis.

INTERLUDE I

18.12.2015, 10:21, DAD'S CAR (DRIVING HOME FROM SYDNEY AIRPORT), AUSTRALIA

Carole King's *Tapestry* plays from the car's stereo. This album never fails to remind me of Dad. How fitting that we should listen to it now, seeing as this is the first time I have seen him in over two years.

Dad drives while I sit in silence (and occasionally sing). I gaze lovingly out the window, drinking in Sydney as it passes by.

"I'm assuming you wanna take the bridge as opposed to the tunnel?" Dad asks as we approach the exits to the Northern suburbs.

"You know it!" I answer enthusiastically.

I did not grow up in Sydney, nor have I ever lived in or spent considerable time there, but there is something indescribably special about driving over the bridge and being smacked in the face with that breathtaking view of the harbour. Maybe what I feel is just nostalgia; some odd stirring of pride and pining for my motherland. But as Dad drives (stoically over the bridge) my chest fills with a kind of restless delight. I grab my tablet and start snapping pictures recklessly. I do not even care that the glare from the car's windscreen will render them all kitsch and amateurish.

Later I will post one of those pictures to Instagram with the caption, "Harbour bridge through the windscreen! No one has ever been this jazzed to be home."

19.12.2015, 06:30, 150 BRUCE STREET, AUSTRALIA

Dad texts me at 06:30, "up 4 a swim?"

I am already awake (cheers jet lag!) and just getting out of the shower. I call him back,

"Hi Dad...Yeah I'll come, but can we get breakfast after cause I haven't eaten yet? Okay, see you soon."

I go and wake up my little sister and let her know that dad and I are going swimming. She is all sleepy eyed and messy haired.

"Alright, I'll come too," she says, "but I have to be at work around 08:30."

The weather is crystal clear and hot! The temperature is already well over twenty degrees celsius and the smell of bush fire lingers in the air. "Now this is Australian summer!" I think to myself and inhale deeply. The acrid air momentarily stings my nostrils and burns my lungs, but I do not care, the flood of memories triggered by the scent, have rendered me

permanently smiling.

When I first left Australia, I did not expect to miss the beach or the summer thunderstorms or the blazing azure of the Southern Hemisphere sky. I did not believe that scenery or nature or sensual experience was something that human beings developed a relationship with, something we carry with us, something that shapes who we are and how much pleasure we find in our physical surroundings.

The smell of bushfire, the deafening hum of cicadas, the soupy consistency of too humid air all situate me firmly, bodily, sensorily within Australia. I cannot help but be present. I cannot help but fall headlong into being back here.

At 07:30 the beach is already relatively busy and the tide is going out. The water is intensely salty and aqua coloured. Considering the temperature of the air, the water is a brisk sixteen degrees celsius and it takes the breath out of me as I dive under the first wave. But, the peace, affinity and utter contentment I feel in the water is as close to a spiritual experience I think I will ever get.

I giggle at first and then begin to properly laugh, loud and raucous (my mother's laugh). My younger sister, still sleepy, a little jaded and too cool for me, throws me a furtive side-eye glance. She cannot understand though, she cannot know what it feels like to swim in the Pacific ocean after a long hiatus. What it feels like to plunge under actual waves - waves strong and powerful enough to drown a person. What it feels like to have to "read" the beach - looking for the riptides and sweeps. What it feels like to open your eyes underwater and have to close them again immediately because the salt stings too harshly.

Water is my element. I have been swimming and riding waves basically, since I was six years old. I do not know what it is to be afraid of the ocean and anyway, I know this ocean. I know it so well and even though I ignore it, even though I choose to live so far away from it, it still knows me. We know each other, and swimming in it now feels like the embrace of an old friend - comfortable and familiar.

I do not wash my hair for a day or two after this swim. I let salt accumulate in it, turning it curly and sticky. I want to carry the ocean with me in my hair. Like an aquatic Sampson. My salty hair is my power and I want to feel the euphoria it provides forever.

THEORY

This chapter aims to place my research topic within a theoretical context by exploring other researcher's definitions and understandings of home. I examine how the feeling of home is strongly linked to a sense of familiarity, before dissecting some of the ways familiarity is cultivated and experienced. I also explain the relationship between my research and phenomenology, as well as the significance of time and time consciousness. The importance of the notion of contemporary nomadism to my research is also acknowledged and discussed.

HOME AND PHENOMENOLOGY

The theoretical framework of this thesis, and indeed its entire philosophical underpinning, is centred in phenomenology. I chose to work with phenomenology because my research topic of home, in the way that I experience it as the researcher, is a very embodied concept and experience. No two people will feel at home in the same way and this is one of the main reasons why phenomenology is theoretically useful, because it focuses upon the researcher's individual understanding of the world. The phenomenon is shaped by the researcher, through their understanding and their lived body and senses (Kallio-Tavin, 2013).

The embodiment, in this study of an individual homing process, is informed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty's idea that existence happens through the moving, feeling, sensing and perceiving body, which is intrinsically part of subjectivity (as cited in Kallio-Tavin, 2013), and is experienced as embodied, inter-subjective, and contingent and enmeshed in personal and cultural nets of significance (Simms & Stawarska, 2013).

I am cognizant of the fact that the subjective and embodied nature of phenomenology means that no two researchers will perceive a phenomenon the same way. Therefore, a researcher's experience of: gender, race, ideology, language etc. need to be considered when practising phenomenology. I want to emphasize that my understanding of and subsequent use of phenomenology aligns with that outlined by Simms and Stawarska (2013) who state that, "A critical phenomenology understands the contingencies of human experience and consciousness and works on understanding the pervasive influences of ideology, politics, language and power structures as they construct and constrain the lived experiences of people" (p. 11).

HOME AND TIME

According to physicist A.S. Eddington the ubiquitous feeling of time passing is a common human experience (as cited in

Wackermann, 2005). One that psychiatrist H.E. Lehmann agrees is inherently human but at the same time intensely personal, “Perceiving the ongoing flow of time is one of man’s immediate experiences. Like feelings and sensations, the perception of the passing of time is a private experience” (p. 189). Therefore, if the passing and perception of time is a personal and subjective experience, it lends itself well to phenomenological study, because no two individuals will ever experience time in exactly the same way and the researcher’s unique understanding of the phenomenon moves into focus. In my opinion, there is also a sensory aspect to the experience of time, as its passage and our individual consciousness of the way it passes is often described as being felt (Wackermann, 2005). In this vein the experience of time and the experience of home are somewhat linked as both human experiences are personal, subjective and contain aspects of the sensory.

Philosophers Alain Badiou and Martin Heidegger as well as Lehmann, all believe that time is experienced both internally and externally or objectively and subjectively. Lehmann explains his view by saying, “External time is objective, universal and absolute. It is physical clock time measured by instruments. Internal time is subjective, individual and relative” (as cited in Wackermann, 2005, p. 195). Badiou and Heidegger (as cited in Barker, 2002) pick up on the idea of objective time being structured and measured by instruments such as clocks, stating, “Ordinarily people inhabit a homogenous time where their daily routines are punctuated by the law of the clock” (p. 75). They go on to explain that this kind of organised external time is imperative to the smooth functioning of society, but that they believe it to be an inauthentic concept of time. This is because, the structuring and organising of objective time automatically sequences our experience of it. Time becomes a linear movement from one “now” to another (as cited in Barker, 2002).

The philosopher Edmund Husserl has a similar understanding of time as being non-linear and non-sequential. In his Bernau manuscripts on time consciousness (1917/1918) he outlines that, “Now, past and future are not successive points in time, nor do they form, collectively, an extent of time. They are ways in which time points and durations appear” (as cited in Brough, 2002, p. 147), and the consciousness and flow of time we, as humans, experience, Husserl hypothesizes comes from, “[...] the consciousness of the succession of points, each of which can only be intended as actual now or as a now that has been or is future” (p. 147). Thus, in Husserl’s view of time and time consciousness, at any given moment there is only one now, but there are many pasts and futures that form a continuum (as cited in Brough, 2002).

The notion of subjective/internal time and the idea that time is not linear or sequential inform the use of time within this thesis. In that this thesis does not follow a chronological progression, but rather jumps, non sequentially, through moments in time.

HOME AND THE FAMILIAR

As stated by Australian philosophers Jeff Malpas and Linn Miller (2009) home is not merely a person's place of residence or domestic space. Home is not necessarily the place someone is born, where their parents were born or where they were displaced from. There is something more to feeling at home, something intangible. Throughout this chapter, and indeed the entire thesis, I will attempt to define this intangible quality as being closely linked, and possibly inseparable from the familiar. In my opinion, it is not possible to feel at home without also feeling deeply familiar with certain places or within certain cultures. "Familiarity is the most decisive constituent of the feeling of being at home," (Heller, 1995, p. 5).

Psychologist Ernst Boesch (as cited in Kraft Alsop, 2005) proposes that home is created in childhood. A child with a safe, secure and familiar home will venture farther and explore their world more thoroughly, knowing that they have a safe haven to return to. Christiane Kraft Alsop (2005) expands on Boesch's idea further by saying that a safe and familiar childhood home allows an individual to create an inner compass. This compass is always calibrated to home, to where the individual feels most safe, most secure and most familiar. With this compass a person can navigate all other places that are not home and when they feel lost, and somehow confused, they know that this is because their inner compass is askew; that they are not at home.

For me, the idea that home is always constituted in childhood is problematic, as there are millions of people around the world who have not been afforded the luxury of a safe and secure childhood home. Or whose physical dwelling and domestic space offered haven but the landscape of the outside town or country was chaotic, confusing or dangerous. Are these people then perpetually displaced, without a sense of home and with a poorly calibrated inner compass? I would argue no, that there is more to the familiar than a comfortable childhood.

Malpas and Miller (2009) also pick up on home being somehow linked to a physical place, but not necessarily one from childhood. They believe that home lies somewhere close to our sense of self and that if someone calls a place home they imbue it with particular significance. This significance often includes feelings of belonging, comfort and familiarity. According to Malpas and Miller however, familiarity is not built in childhood, but does have strong links to the past. This is an idea supported by Lucille Korwin-Kossakowski (2013) who believes that when bodies move, easily, from location to location, minds and hearts are left behind, languishing in the past and in what still feels familiar.

For Malpas and Miller (2009), memory is the key between home and the familiar. Memory is both central to our sense of self

and our sense of home, because memory is frequently situated in place and our memories are familiar. This is an idea that I explore further in the *Interpretation - home as* chapter.

The link between memory, home and the familiar is not as straightforward as it might originally seem. If memory is interwoven with our sense of self and our sense of home and memories are so often subject to imagination and interpretation, than would this not mean that home and familiarity are also interwoven with imagination and fantasy (Malpas & Miller, 2009)? In this way home can often be a romanticised and illusory place, one that exists in memory and imagination, but not real life.

The idea that home does not exist in a physical state is supported by Kraft Alsop (2005), albeit not in relation to memory. She believes that home is often experienced as a friction between the familiar and the unknown. Before an individual leaves home it can feel suffocating, boring, quaint and *too* familiar. But once left behind home suddenly becomes perfect again as the individual longs for familiarity, longs to feel comfortable, longs to have the luxury of living life on autopilot (Kraft Alsop, 2005). In this way home never truly exists because if home were perfect we would never long to leave, but if the away were perfect i.e. home, we would never experience homesickness. “Homesickness is the nostalgic longing for a home that symbolizes the happiness that home could no longer provide,” (Kraft Alsop, 2005, p. 409).

Svetlana Boym (2007) supports both Malpas and Miller’s idea that home is imaginary and illusory, and Kraft Alsop’s idea that home exists only as an unobtainable perfect place where homesickness and wanderlust are in balance. Boym defines nostalgia as, “[...] A longing for home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy,” (p. 7).

Like memory and its link to home and the familiar, nostalgia is hard to pin to either space or time, it has a rather uneasy relationship with both. It may originally appear as a longing for a particular place, but it is actually more intertwined with the temporal, to be more precise, nostalgia is a yearning for a different time (Boym, 2007). However, seeing as human beings have a concrete relationship with both place and time, nostalgia is not something that can ever be overcome. We perceive that we move in one direction through time and cannot go backwards, this means that experiences, situations or feelings gone by can never be lived again, except as memories. So the familiar home that one leaves behind, in time grows unfamiliar, which triggers a pining for a familiarity which remains elusive.

It is important to keep in mind however, that the definitions of home discussed in this chapter may not fit everyone’s idea of

what it means to feel familiar and at home. Some people will never feel any tension between their home and the away of the rest of the world. For some people where they physically dwell may be as comfortable and as familiar a home as they could ever want or need. One may never be able to perfectly define what, universally, creates a feeling of home, but in the context of my research question, the previously outlined definitions are appropriate.

My research preconceptions concur with Malpas and Miller in their hypothesis that familiarity is closely tied with memory, and with Kraft Alsop's idea that home does not exist in a physical sense but as an interplay between familiarity and the unknown. However, at this stage, I do not believe that familiarity and the ensuing sense of home can be completely disembodied from physical place. This is because, in my experience, thus far, a substantial aspect of familiarity is tangled up with embodiment and sensory knowledge. How the body feels within a particular place, and moment in time, and what experiences we are subjected to via our senses, all engender (or not) familiarity and in turn a feeling of home.

Lucille Korwin-Kossakowski explains, via autoethnography and a/r/tography, her own journey toward familiarity and home. She describes how, "As the body moves into new locations, the mind and heart linger in liminal, in-between spaces, neither here nor there, longing for the familiar left behind and coming to terms with the sensory stimulus of the new" (2013, p. 3). She further expands on this point by explaining how she feels a sense of the familiar in her native South Africa due to the natural environment and the sensory experiences it provides, "I forged a strong connection with the natural environment. I believed it was the warm earth that would recognize my shadow, and the wind that would know my name and whisper it back" (2013, p. 4).

Agnes Heller (1995) agrees that an aspect of the familiar is constituted by sensual experience. She asks what is familiar? And answers: sounds, colours, light, smells and shapes. These are the characteristics, she believes, that distinguish one place from another, and which we grow attached to and familiar with. Heller proposes that this type of familiarity, born from the sensory, is a spatial home experience.

The other type of home experience, according to Heller (1995) is temporal and is comprised of phenomena such as: universal discourse, kinship, mother tongue and silence. Heller believes that we can feel at home, "In our own language, in the habits of our ethnic group, in our religious community or in the intimate circle of our family" (1995, p. 17), and that this is an inherently temporal way of experiencing home. However, Heller also concludes that spatial and temporal home experiences cannot be transferred (1995). She maintains that eminently sensual experiences are part of a spatial home experience and cannot

be transferred to temporal experience and vice versa. I do not agree with this conclusion because I think it is too simple to categorise home into purely spatial or temporal experiences. For example, under this system, how does one classify memories? Which are neither an entirely spatial nor temporal phenomenon.

HOME AND CONTEMPORARY NOMADISM

Jan Willem Duyvendak (2011) claims that movement has become fundamental to modern identity. Matt Rodda (2015) supports this claim by stating that, increasingly, “Movement is seen as an imperative for career development and success, while being still is associated with stagnation and death” (p. 859). However, there are a multitude of ways that people move around the globe for an equal multitude of reasons. In the case of my particular research, it is important to point out, that I am placing my thesis within a context of privileged movement. When I refer to movement and define nomadism it is from a prosperous Western background, where movement is often portrayed as a positive experience and as a conscious choice (Juutunen, Kalčić & Rogela, 2014).

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *1000 Plateaus* (as cited in Rodda, 2015) identify the difference between migrant and nomad based on the relationship between place and movement. According to them, migrant people belong in a specific place but move due to exceptional circumstances, usually some form of strife or upheaval. While the nomadic lifestyle is intrinsically linked to movement and is characterised precisely by this movement (as cited in Rodda, 2015). Marko Juutunen, Špela Kalčić and Nataša Rogela (2014) also define nomadism in a similar way, saying, “The movement, rather than the settlement in a specific destination, characterises distinctively the lifestyle of these people” (p. 12). Therefore, if nomadism is defined first and foremost by movement than I am not convinced that I can call myself a nomad, although I do acknowledge that the last seven years of my life have been characterised by movement, especially back and forth between particular places. On the other hand, if migration always implies a forced leaving of one’s home, exclusion and lack of choice or options, as implied by Rodda (2015), I cannot define my journey by this term either. Regardless of how I choose to label the movement within my life, in my opinion, there is still an increasing global trend toward movement and nomadism, one that is, according to Pascal Gielen (as cited in Rodda, 2015), “Built up around the positive (romanticised) aspects of travel, mobility and unattachment” (p. 857).

My research acknowledges that there are a number of privileged nomads moving around the world. Whether they be professionals travelling and relocating for career opportunities, fresh graduates on gap years and personal quests, lovers and spouses moving for the sake of relationships or retirees hoping to see the world and lead a less sedentary lifestyle; this subset of humanity exists and it is important to understand how they develop a sense of familiarity and home.

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I identify and explain the main research methods I have used to create and gather data. I explain the rationale behind each method, as well as the process of implementation. I also describe, in general, how I went about conducting my research.

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner (2000) describe autoethnography as an autobiographical genre of writing and research that exhibits many layers of consciousness, connecting the personal and the cultural. Autoethnographers peer, first through an ethnographic wide-angled lens, identifying and focusing upon social and cultural aspects of their personal experience, before turning inward, uncovering a vulnerable self. The alternating between inward and outward focus enables the distinctions between the personal and the cultural to become blurred (Bochner & Ellis, 2000).

Ellis and Bochner define the primary purpose of autoethnography and autoethnographers as the pursuit of understanding of self or some aspect of a life lived in a cultural context (Bochner & Ellis, 2000), and Stacy Holman Jones (2005) states that autoethnography strives to hold self and culture together. Ellis and Bochner (2000), and Holman Jones (2005) agree that autoethnography is an interdisciplinary method combining together research and writing practices from: anthropology, sociology, psychology, literary criticism, journalism, poetry and creative writing.

I chose to work with autoethnography for this thesis project because, as stated by Anniina Suominen in her doctoral dissertation, “Autoethnography is about writing one’s self into culture, but it is also about writing about one’s personal experience in relationship to larger issues in society,” (2003, p. 39). Autoethnography weaves together individual and personal experience with broader social and cultural phenomena, that allows for an identification and resonance to occur within readers. This is what I am aiming to do by researching the phenomenon of the homing process via my individual experience of it. It is not my life, however, that is the subject of the study, but rather home, homing and familiarity explored through the conduit that is me and my experiences.

Ellis and Bochner (2000) and Suominen (2003) all pick up on the ability of autoethnography to resonate with and move readers. They all outline the overall strength and purpose of personal narrative by saying, “[This I believe is] the power and significance of personal narratives in scholarship, it touches, it sometimes hurts, it has a potential to help to heal and recover while being informative about cultural phenomena” (Suominen, 2003, p. 39). As well as:

The usefulness of these stories is their capacity to inspire conversation from the point of view of the readers, who enter from the perspective of their own lives. The narrative rises and falls on its capacity to provoke readers to broaden their horizons, reflect critically on their own experience, enter empathically into worlds of experience different from their own, and actively engage in dialogue regarding the social and moral implications of the different perspectives and standpoints encountered. (Bochner & Ellis, 2000, p. 748).

ARTS-BASED RESEARCH

Arts-based research is a methodology I have only recently become familiar with. In fact, it was not until I participated in a methodology course, during second semester of my master studies, that I was introduced to it. I remember sitting in a short introductory lecture and having arts-based research explained and examples of theses, which had employed the method, shown and I experienced a moment of inspiration and clarity. I thought to myself, “So, I can actually make art as a form of research? Why has no one told me this before?” From that point on I was very adamant in using the methodology to conduct my own thesis research.

In general, arts-based research is still an emerging or fledgling research methodology. The method started gaining credibility in the 1970s and 1980s through the work of Elliot Eisner who had begun to combine qualitative research with aesthetic concerns and the techniques of narrative fiction (“Arts-based research”, 2008). Patricia Leavy (2009), explains that arts-based research comprises a new methodological genre within qualitative research. One that, in part, evolved from arts-based therapies and poses significant challenges to qualitative conventions, especially by disturbing many assumptions about what constitutes research and knowledge. This unsettling of qualitative conventions however, has allowed a method to emerge which offers alternatives to traditional research methods. Arts-based research enables phenomena such as: love, death, power, memory, belonging, despair, joy, hope and suffering to be researchable. As Leavy states, “These highly conceptual topics, which represent some of the most fundamental aspects of human experience, are often impossible to access through traditional research practices” (2009, p. 4).

This is one of the key reasons I have chosen to work with arts-based research as a methodology for this thesis, because it allows me to place my own life and human experiences under a microscope and study such intangible concepts as: home, familiarity and nomadism.

The technique and goal of arts-based research has been described in a number of ways, including by Eisner and Tom Barone (2012) as, “A methodological approach that exploits the capacities of expressive form to capture qualities of life that impact what we know and how we live” (p. 4). However, an explanation I am rather partial to is that by Shaun McNiff (2007) who describes arts-based research as:

The systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people that they involve in their studies. (p. 29).

I feel this definition captures the scope of artistic production which can be considered as modes of enquiry. As well as concisely pinpointing what arts-based research aims to do and why it is a valuable research methodology i.e. because it brings the researcher closer to knowing by immersing them in the process of knowledge production. When one writes their own poem, paints their own picture or performs their own play they are at the centre of the creative process and thus are able to gain insights based on tacit and embodied knowledge. The yield of such knowledge is notoriously hard to articulate and therefore interviewing or observing others may rarely access the same depth of knowing (McNiff, 2007).

In the context of this thesis project, I believe arts-based research is an appropriate choice of methodology because it involves an indefinite and on-going process. One that produces no concrete results and is particularly good for contemplating the change and movement experienced by an expatriate perpetually navigating the homing process.

EMBODIED WRITING

When I was a little girl, aged four or five, I told my mum that when I grew up I wanted to be an author-illustrator. I wished to both write and illustrate my imaginary publications because I could not decide whether I liked writing stories or drawing pictures more. As I grew older however, it became apparent that I was more comfortable expressing myself textually and this preferred mode of expression has manifest itself in my almost obsessive journaling and list making habit. I think through text. For me, an idea is not articulated and does not completely exist until it has been written down. Writing is also cathartic and therapeutic, as articulated by Rebecca Solnit in her book *The Faraway Nearby*, “Writing is saying to no one and to everyone the things it is not possible to say to someone” (2005, p. 64).

Naturally I continued recording my feelings, experiences and random snippets of life when I moved to Manchester, England in 2009. After collecting roughly seven years worth of jotted notes, scrawled memories and other assorted scribbles, I discovered, quite by accident, that the method I have always used to sort my thoughts is akin to embodied writing. From there it seemed a “no brainer” to continue to use writing as a methodology. As a way to gain new and deeper knowledge about myself and the wider concepts of home, nomadism and familiarity, “Writing is a method of inquiry, a way of finding out about yourself and your topic” (Richardson, 2000, p. 923).

Embodied writing pairs intricately textured experiences of the body with the art of writing. It relays human experience from the inside out and reminds us that human life is embedded in a sensual world (Anderson, 2001). Its efficacy as a research tool lies in its capacity to engender a resonance between the written text and the senses of the readers. This allows readers to more fully experience the phenomenon described (Anderson, 2001). In much the same way as empathy enables human beings to understand what others are experiencing emotionally, embodied writing allows readers to feel, in their bodies, what others are experiencing sensorily.

This sensual resonance is something I have experienced a handful of times, although with more frequency since embarking upon this thesis project. When I first began to seriously consider using autoethnography to research home, I read Kraft Alsop’s chapter *Home and away: Self-reflexive auto/ethnography* from *Auto/biography and auto/ethnography: Praxis of research method* (Roth (ed), 2005) and the line, “Homesickness is the nostalgic longing for a home that symbolizes the happiness that home could no longer provide” (p. 409). Really spoke to an all encompassing bodily feeling which I had been experiencing for years, but was unable to articulate. I remember saying out loud, “Oh my gosh! Yes! This person gets it. This is what homesickness feels like!” I felt like I had discovered a little piece of myself as I was finally able to put into words, a state of being fairly integral to my life.

It was with the help of Kraft Alsop’s chapter that I became aware of the fact that I discover myself through other people’s writing. When I read something interesting and relatable (that someone else has written) I experience a rush of self discovery. I then dig into the feeling, asking myself: Why do I feel this way and what has this other person’s writing resonated with inside me? This is why, I believe embodied writing and autoethnography are valid and valuable research methodologies. Writing your own experiences, from a more personal point of view, can still resonate deeply with others and interconnect with wider cultural and social phenomena.

The embodied part of embodied writing also ties into one of the three ways I identify in the Interpretations - home as chapter,

as being integral to my homing process and the way I experience a sense of home i.e. home as sensory experience. Familiar sounds, sights and smells engender a sense of familiarity. The way a city sounds, the way a city smells and the way the body becomes, almost, subconsciously able to orientate itself within familiar surroundings are all embodied phenomena and they all contribute to the homing process.

EMBROIDERY

12.01.2016, 14:23, 45 RUSSELL ROAD, AUSTRALIA

I walk down the long hallway and into the living room. My mum is sitting on the sofa reading something or other.

"Mum," I say and disturb her, "is Nanna¹ good at embroidery?"

She contemplates my question for a moment and then replies, "Well, she can embroider, but I would say I am better at it than her."

"Right," I say and then walk back along the hallway.

My mother is a fairly capable embroiderer (she executes an especially skillful satin stitch) and I remember her spending hours stitching intricate flowers on a baby blanket before my little sister was born. But she did not teach me the skill as a child and if I remember correctly, I never asked her to do so.

Mum disturbs me a short time later. She's dug up some old embroidery projects of hers. Some are from her time at primary school.

"Look at this satin stitch," she points toward it, "I was a very neat embroiderer."

"Oh my gosh!" I exclaim, "that is exceptionally neat embroidery."

Looking at mum's projects now, strewn across the carpeted study floor, I remember her either working on, or showing them to me as a child. There's the three dimensional interactive play blanket, she started but never quite finished, which includes

1 Nanna is my maternal grandmother. Nanna is a very common name by which English speakers call their grandmothers.

a pony with lace for its mane and intricate chain stitch saddle. There's a baby blanket decorated with a bouquet of woollen flowers and pillowcase with two playful puppies in the corner.

I cannot see much of my own haphazard and experimental technique in her precise and uniform style, however, I do wonder why, previously, I did not show more interest in the art form?

During my exchange semester in Stockholm, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to, not only improve my embroidery skills, but also actively use embroidery in my course work. The course Visual and performative ethnography required the students to engage in ethnographic practices. Seizing the opportunity to try-out research methodologies on a much smaller scale, I chose to work with autoethnography and create embroidery as the visual component.

It might appear a little counter intuitive to embark on a thesis project which relies, in part, upon arts-based research and then choose to create aforementioned art in a, for all intents and purposes, unfamiliar medium, but this was a strategic choice. Arts-based research is not, after all, primarily about making art. It is about researching phenomena through an artistic or creative process, in order to gain access to different kind of knowledge; knowledge which cannot be produced through more traditional research methods. In this way, the experimental nature of my embroidery is a discovery process of both knowledge of technique and execution, and knowledge of home.

24.01.2016, 17:49, 116 MACQUARIE STREET, AUSTRALIA

I'm at Dad and Marie's² place. I've been staying here for the last couple of nights. I like this place. It is very peaceful and quiet. Tucked away in a corner of Merewether, that no one seems to know exists, cars don't come up here and tall gum trees and thick underbrush surround the house.

This afternoon the house will be full of family: brothers, sisters, grandkids and various partners. It will be loud and raucous and everyone will talk over everyone else, but for now the only sound comes from the Kookaburras laughing maniacally and the television broadcasting the NutriGrain ironman and woman 2016 series.

I am watching this series and embroidering at the same time. I am working on a corner of sky that needs to, eventually,

2 Marie is my step-mother. I always call her Marie.

contain a glowing sun-like orb. However, I do not know how to sew perfectly round and filled in circles. I turn my attention to the telly for a minute or two and let my mind subconsciously ponder over the embroidery puzzle. Before long though, I am back, making methodical and purposeful stitches, working toward a pleasing representation of the sun, without really knowing how.

Why is it that my hands just seem to know how to make? I have never embroidered a solid orb before, and yet, when I am finished the outcome is just what I had hoped for. My hands seem to take over the process, the muscles leading the brain, as opposed to the other way around. Like a cockroach has leg muscles that run long before its tiny brain starts thinking, my hands run on, far in front of my conscious mind.

It is mentioned by Weick (as cited in Petranker, 2005) that people know what they are doing only after they have done it. So how is it possible for my hands to have access to a well of knowledge my consciousness seems barred from? According to Michael Polanyi (as cited in Toom, 2012) this kind of knowing is possible through a process he has named tacit knowledge, but the same phenomenon is also known as silent knowledge.

Tacit knowledge refers to an implicit way of knowing that includes embedded beliefs, attitudes and values (Toom, 2012). It constitutes a range of conceptual and sensory information that can be drawn upon in an attempt to make sense of something (Smith, 2003). However, this sense making process is often easier “done than said”, as discoveries and truths garnered via tacit knowledge are, normally, not in a form that can be explained in formal terms (Smith, 2003). Polanyi has stated that, “we can know more than we can tell” (as cited in Toom, 2012, p. 623), and this belief is supported by Petranker who states, “The absence of words can be the presence of understanding” (2005, p. 248).

Tacit knowledge is an integral part of my embroidery process. When I begin embroidering I am never sure exactly what the end product will look like, and in fact, this is not so important. What is important is the interplay between the embodied experience made visual through the embroidery and the embodied experience articulated by my stories. Both types of embodiment produce different knowledge. The stories communicate embodied experiences which have been processed, understood, reflected upon and articulated *after* knowledge has already formed. While the embroideries reflect a situated and in-the-moment knowing, where the focus is on the action in which the knowing is manifested (Toom, 2012).

My stories enable me to articulate moments and memories that are particularly crucial to the homing process. They reflect

conscious and purposeful thinking and processing. I often write and rewrite the stories until I feel they adequately capture how I felt, what I saw, what I heard, what I could taste or smell, in each individual moment. The embroideries, in contrast, emphasize a small part of each story. A part I have identified as being most prominent or important. They help to illustrate exactly what aspects of each memory have allowed me to feel at home, or on the other hand, totally out of place. The composition of the embroidered pieces are a lot less consciously planned. I rely on tacit knowledge to guide my hands and trust in the outcome. During this process my mind is often somewhere else, and after I have finished the piece I will suddenly have an epiphany and think to myself something like, “Oh! I hadn’t realised the sound of cicadas was so important to my sense of familiarity in Australia.” Then, I will look down to where I have been working and become aware of the fact that, the whole time, my hands were methodically stitching an embroidered cicada.

STORY - WORDS AND PICTURES

This chapter introduces the data I have created, namely the embroidered pieces and embodied stories. The embroidery and stories are presented in pairs, as they evolved in tandem, mutually informing each other. The creative process of some of the pairs was more interactive, with both the story and embroidery ideas simultaneously evolving and a more overt back and forth interaction developed. While with other pairs the embodied story or the embroidery more clearly developed first and lead the act of making. Depending upon whether the embroidered work or embodied story started to develop first in the creation/ research process, dictates the order in which I have chosen to present them in this chapter.

PIPE



Pipe (February 2015)

Pipe the embroidery started to evolve before the embodied story. The abstract and minimal nature of the embroidered composition inspired the sparse and laconic style of the accompanying poetry. While working on the Sachiko segment, the flowing and repetitive nature of my hand movements, coupled with the wave like look of the Sachiko, recalled memories from my teenage years, of afternoons spent at the “pipe”.

The work was created using Sachiko technique and French knots. The Sachiko - the broken and intermingled lines in the middle of the composition, represents the Pacific ocean, perpetually seething and roiling, that I would watch for hours from my pipe vantage point. While the French knots - the dot like stitches covering the lower half of the work, represent the flecks of colour reflected off soft golden sand in the afternoon sun. The sand on Newcastle beaches is naturally very gold and picturesque, but it is also made up of different minerals such as mica and also bits of ground up glass and crushed shells. As a result, sometimes flecks of pink or green or silver can be seen glinting in the sun.

Salt, stinging, sticky, salt.

Stones, sharp and pointy, jabbing into soft feet.

Cars and utes crawling along John Parade,

“Suckers who drive.”

Fence, weeds, shale and rock, sand dune, storm water drain, smooth concrete, vantage point.

Surf, afternoon, grommits, breakers, deep green and fluffy white wash.

“This is my pipe”, “This is my place.”

Serenity, comfort salt...

Stinging, sticky, salt!³

Inspired by the embroidered piece, I wrote *Pipe*, the story, about when I was a teenager and my father lived directly across from Merewether beach (in Newcastle). This stretch of beach has a stormwater drain, where excess water runs off into the ocean. The drain comes out in the dunes which overlook the beach, so it is higher up than the rest of the landscape. My brothers, sister and I often came to sit on the pipe and watch the surfers or just the empty waves, or sometimes we would go and hangout together with a pack of cards or our homework and talk and laugh until dinner time, and sometimes I went there by myself to think or feel angsty (I was a teenager after all). The sound of the waves and the in and out of the tide was therapeutic and

3 Story taken from my personal notebook, 01.03.2015

relaxing. Spending time at the pipe are some of my earliest memories relating primarily to the beach, the Pacific ocean, salty water and sensory experience.

Pipe is written as a poem, of sorts, because I wanted to convey the sensory nature of walking from my father's house to the pipe late on a summer afternoon, with as few words as possible. Being at the pipe was, more than anything else, a sensual experience. I would go there to experience and be with the beach. Words were not as important as what I felt, saw, heard, smelt or tasted while at the pipe. I wanted *Pipe* to portray the carefree and innocent life experience of a teenager growing up in a Newcastle beachside suburb.

AND THE SUN SHONE ON THE YELLOWING LEAVES

The slightly damp leaves crunch then squish under my green plimsolls. I am walking through a small forest area in Kumpula. I have never walked here before, but today I feel the trees calling to me, beckoning me to explore amongst their shelter and shade.

It is early October so the air is turning brisk and my nose begins to drip periodically in the chill. My slow meandering pace allows the frigid cold of the forest floor to penetrate the thin soles of my shoes and begin to creep up into my ankles. The pain of slowly freezing extremities, unexpectedly, reminds me of Newcastle. In particular the beach during winter, when no one is around, other than the diehard surfers. It is a travesty to walk on sand wearing shoes of any kind, so I would walk and run and play barefoot and feel the damp and chilly sand slowly turning my feet to numb blocks of ice. Then, with aching ankles, I would walk home, still barefoot, and let the warmth of the footpaths defrost my toes and soles.

Strange, how here, in a place with no sand, no salt and no surfers, I should find myself feeling relaxed and somehow in a similar environment⁴.

The embodied story *And the sun shone on the yellowing leaves* explores my relationship to a particular forest area close by where I live in Helsinki. Early one autumn evening I was walking in the forest and I suddenly became aware that the chill from the damp, October ground, was seeping through the soles of my shoes and making my ankles ache. This aching sensation

4 Story taken from my personal notebook, 17.10.2015

transported me, bodily, back to the beaches of my hometown; where I often experienced the same aching after spending time running or walking barefoot in damp, cold, winter sand.

I was taken aback and quite surprised to feel, in a forest in Helsinki in autumn, such a strong connection to an embodied experience I associate with Australia. I began to consider whether the sensory is a key way in which I home myself and potentially how others home themselves too.



And the sun shone on the yellowing leaves (October 2015)

The embroidered piece *And the sun shone on the yellowing leaves* was created in tandem with the embodied story of the same name. In contrast to the way that the *Pipe* embroidery worked as a catalyst to open up memories of important sensory experiences, this work responds to oddly similar sensory moments. The tactile nature of the fabric I chose to work with also fed into the back and forth interplay between: the physical and in-the-moment embroidery work, the embodied experience (that inspired the embroidery) and the memories wrapped up with both i.e. working with my hands and walking in forests and on sand.

The *And the sun shone on the yellowing leaves* embroidery focuses on one aspect of the embodied story, mainly the autumn leaves that were littering the cold ground of the forest. I chose to embroider onto a scrap of brown corduroy fabric because the colour and texture reminded me of the forest floor in autumn - muddy and soft. As well as the velvety feel of sand against bare-feet. The colours used are mostly autumnal and some of the leaves are simply skeletons, to represent the forest going through a process of death.

SALT & SUN



Salt & Sun (January 2016)

Salt & Sun the embroidery evolved a little differently to both the *Pipe* and the *And the sun shone on the yellowing leaves* pieces, in that I neither started the embroidery nor the embodied story first, but worked on them both simultaneously. I composed parts of the story in my mind, but did not rush to commit it to paper, and instead worked with the embroidery, letting both creative pieces inform each other.

With this embroidery I was more experimental and abstract than I have been with some of the other pieces. It made sense to embroider the water, as the embodied story primarily speaks about my relationship with the ocean. I did not plan the composition but instead selected a number of appropriately coloured threads and then simply began embroidering the composition “on the fly”. I also experimented with technique by using stitches I had not previously used in other pieces, such as: satin stitch, couching stitch and star stitch.

The tide is going out but has not yet reached its lowest point. There is a slight breeze but the temperature of the air is already convincingly over twenty degrees celsius. The water is relatively calm with a small shore break and pure aqua coloured. I feel as if I have never seen such a beautiful beach.

I strip down to my swimmers quickly and hurry toward the water. It is cold compared to the temperature of the air. My tolerance for cold water has greatly increased since living in Finland. Once upon a time I would not swim if the water was below twenty-one degrees, but that just seems excessive now-a-days. Still, the sudden chill takes the breath out of me as I dive under the first wave.

The water is intensely salty. It stings the eyes and parches the throat, but I associate this level of saltiness with home. This beach, this ocean, this water is familiar to me. Swimming in it now feels like the embrace of an old friend. As much as I’ve ignored this ocean, as much as I choose to live so far away from it, it still knows and accepts me.⁵

Salt & Sun was written after I took a jetlagged dip in the Pacific ocean (19th December, 2015) with my father and sister. The last time I had swum in this ocean was October 2013, so I had been looking forward to the swim for some time. In this story I have tried to capture the sensory joy I experienced upon returning to the beach in my hometown. The feel of the warm morning air, the slight bite already present in the sun, the contrast of the chilly water with the humid air, the stinging of the

⁵ Story taken from my personal notebook, 20.12.2015 - edited until 08.08.2016

salty water and the deep serenity that came from experiencing, once again, something very familiar but very unique to life in Newcastle.

DAYDREAMING

I am lying on the thick, slightly prickly grass in the shade. The cicadas are humming and whirring, as it is a warm afternoon. Busy honey bees flutter and buzz about the mess of overgrown flowers threatening to overrun the back veranda.

My eyes are slightly heavy and it is hard to concentrate on the magazine I hold in my hands. A slight and dainty sea breeze plays around my bare legs.

“Ah, to wear shorts!” I think to myself.

In my adoptive country no one would be wearing shorts at this time of year. Their legs would be snug, maybe even sweaty, bundled under layers of long johns, track pants and outerwear.

I put down the magazine. It is clear I am far too sleepy and far too content to read. I half open my eyes and stare up at the sky. The sky in this part of the world is altogether a different colour. It is so blue! Azure occasionally bordering on sapphire. But low, the sky appears to hang low and on really hot, dry days it can feel oppressive.

I close my eyes again and listen to the cicadas hum, the bees buzz, the distant raucous cawing of cockatoos. Through the screen door, I listen to my youngest brother watching cricket, my father preparing the dinner, and I sigh. I am content. For now, I am home.⁶

Daydreaming is an embodied story written about a memory I have from a visit to Australia in October 2013. Thus, the memory was formed well before I began researching for this thesis. However, I have chosen to develop the memory into an embodied

6 Story taken from my personal notebook, 23.02.2015

story because when I first began sifting through memories and experiences to write about, this one immediately jumped out at me. As a result, I have come to the conclusion that this particular memory is important to my understanding of home in relation to Australia and my hometown.

Daydreaming describes a memory from my father and stepmothers' house, however, they do not live in this house anymore, they moved soon after I wrote this story. After my mother sold my childhood home, Dad and Marie's place became more important to me because I began to see it as an anchor point within Newcastle and Australia. Often when I thought about Australia, through the lens of home, I would think about this house with its jungle-esque garden, wide veranda and shabby beach cottage aesthetic. Home in Australia was this house, with its garden, its perpetually sandy floors and its proximity to the beach. When Dad and Marie sold the house I felt adrift for a week or two. I asked myself question like: can Newcastle still be home now that Dad's place is gone? Where is home now that Dad does not live by the beach?

While I was most recently visiting Newcastle (December 2015 - February 2016), Sophie and Tom⁷ informed me that Dad and Marie's old house was demolished by the developers who bought the property. I felt a tug in my chest upon hearing this and I said to them, "For real? I don't think I want to walk past and see that."

"Yeah, it's pretty brutal really," Tom replied.

But, during my last week in Australia I did walk past the site of the old house. It was a little bit shocking to see this place, that had been so important to my sense of security and familiarity reduced to rubble, but at the same time, no feelings of upheaval or being adrift persisted. I felt nostalgic, definitely, but I also grew more sure of my preliminary research findings; that a physical dwelling is not how I home myself anymore.

⁷ Sophie is my younger biological sister (mostly called Soph) and Tom is my youngest stepbrother.



Daydreaming (February 2015)



Daydreaming (February 2015)



Daydreaming (February 2015)

The *Daydreaming* embroideries were created after the embodied story, as a way to explore, research and discover what exactly it is about that particular memory that is important to me and my understanding of home. Why do I go to this memory in particular, as opposed to countless others I have from life in this house? And what is it about this memory that feels particularly homey? Through the process of tacit knowledge and trusting in my hands, I found that what I embroidered i.e. the jungle garden, cicada and bee, are the key components of this memory and why it so strongly links to my idea of home.

The embroideries depict the abundance of flowers that grew in the garden at Dad and Marie's place, as well as the bees and cicadas that could be seen and, more often, heard in the garden. As the vibrant colours of the flowers and the insects are important I chose to embroider onto white and cream fabric, so as not to draw attention away from the actual embroidery. The garden and the insects both illustrate sensory experiences that cultivated familiarity, which in turn made that house and this distinct memory from it, feel like home. For example, the sound of cicadas, which lived in the trees around the house, only sing when the temperature is above 16 degrees celsius. So their humming and chirping reminds me strongly of the Newcastle beach climate.

LORDS OF DOGTOWN

The internet connection in my dorm room is not yet working, so I decide to stave off boredom by preparing dinner and watching a film.

I open the *downloads* folder on my desktop and find myself oddly drawn toward the film *Lords of Dogtown*. It is a Hollywood take on the development and rise of professional skateboarding in Venice Beach in the 1970s. I have not watched this film in years and I do not even particularly like it, but in this moment, in this strange new city and strange new room, the familiarity of it seems, somehow, soothing.

As I attempt to slice capsicum with an impossibly blunt knife, the ke-chrrrrrrrr sound of skateboards rolling and flipping, takes me back to Saturday mornings, spent on the couch with my numerous brothers, watching skating videos. To the time my little brothers and I skated along the quiet streets, around my stepmother's house, and a car stopped and the driver yelled at us. To summer afternoons, outside on our street, where one of my brothers tried to teach me to olly (I never really did get the hang of it).

I finish butchering various vegetables with that sorry excuse for a knife and settle into my memories. At this moment, in this unfamiliar new life, they comfort me.⁸

Lords of Dogtown was originally written in Stockholm, however I have periodically revised and edited the text until I felt it adequately captured the moment of when a sudden familiar noise brought back a flood of comforting memories.

In much the same way as the *Salt & Sun* embodied story and embroidery were created in unison and simultaneously informed each other, such was the case with this embodied story and the partner embroidery. The first draft of the story, in hindsight, did not delve deep enough into exactly what it was about the film which triggered a flood of comforting memories about my teenage years, brothers and the very bodily activity of skateboarding. After completing the embroidery and realising that it was not a skateboard I had stitched, but my two younger brothers, I decided to go back to the story and emphasise more the link between the film and memories about family. The link is obviously skateboarding and the embodied nature of the activity.

8 Story taken from my personal notebook, 21.01.2015 - edited until 30.08.2016

In my case it was the specific sound of skating that precipitated the memories, but the same reaction could have just as easily been brought about by focusing upon the way the skaters move, for example. As is the case with the majority of my embodied stories and embroideries, there is a definite interplay between sensory experience and significant memory.



Lords of Dogtown (March 2015)

The aspect of the *Lords of Dogtown* embroidery that I find most interesting and striking, is that I have depicted my younger brothers (Lachie⁹ and Tom) as they look now, as adults, and not as they looked as teenagers. This was a subconscious choice and something I only became fully aware of recently.

This embroidered piece is the one most informed by “real life”. I attempted to capture my brothers’ likeness and therefore chose colours that matched with their individual eye and hair colour (although my brother Tom would probably argue that he has green eyes, but I have never agreed). I chose the thick, dark navy fabric to embroider onto because I did not want the background fabric to detract attention from the actual embroidery. Also, the texture of the fabric is rough and a little harsh and this reminds me of Lachie and Tom who are both a little rugged and rough around the edges.

The word shredding is a slang term used in skateboarding when someone performs a particularly difficult trick or generally just skates well. The word also became a personal joke, at one point, between my brothers, my sister Sophie and I. So using it in the embroidery composition highlights the connection with skating as well as, potentially, conjuring memories associated with the word in the minds of my family members, should they ever see the piece.

9 Lachlan is my younger biological brother, he is always called Lachie.

PLEASE, STOP TALKING



Please, stop talking (March 2015)

The creation of this embroidery and the embodied story went back and forth and back and forth for months. I originally wrote the (first version of the) story while living in Stockholm (spring, 2015). I remember being at a workshop and listening to the presenter talk on and on, in English. I grew tired of listening and started wondering why she was still speaking when she had already made the same point about three times. I then started to wonder whether the fact that she was speaking English, and not her native Swedish, influenced her way of superfluous speech.

I then began to analyse my reaction to this presenter's way of speaking and realised that since living in Finland, I have developed an aversion to the way English is often spoken with, seemingly, too many words. I explored this realisation by creating the *Please, stop talking* embroidery first and then writing a preliminary story based on what I had been able to make conscious through the process of the handiwork. Eventually, I went back and wrote the final embodied story about a totally different experience where I felt the same frustration at, what I perceived to be, a pointless amount of over explaining and needless talking by someone speaking English. When I wrote this final version I used the embroidery as a reference point to remind myself how irritating and confusing this style of speaking is for me.

The Please, stop talking embroidered work is rather busy with the colourful tartan fabric in the background and the multicoloured "blahs". I purposefully chose to use a fabric which would distract from the embroidery and confuse the viewer. This is because I want the viewer to feel how I feel when I listen to English spoken by native speakers i.e. occasionally overwhelmed and a little bit confused.

It is late, past midnight. I am lying in my bed and listening to an American podcast. The host has a talk-back section where listeners submit questions and queries and he provides answers and advice. The talking is starting to really irritate me but I cannot quite pinpoint why. The caller rehashes, possibly for the third time, what her issue is and I yell, to no one in particular, "We get it! You told us this already. Just stop talking!" And then it hits me - I am irritated by the propensity to say little with too many words.

Before coming to Finland I do not remember ever being annoyed by the sound of someone's voice. I do not remember ever thinking that an individual talked too much. I do not remember ever wishing that someone would get to the point faster or use less flowery language.

I spoke only English and was primarily surrounded by English speakers. English speakers waffle, English

speakers use needless hyperbole, English speakers fill up silences with more and more talk. I am not saying that I am not guilty of these same linguistic characteristics, simply that I can no longer tolerate when other people speak this way.

I relax back into my bed. I am much calmer now; having identified laconicism as one of the reasons why I am so at home in Finland.¹⁰

Please, stop talking is about how my relationship with my mother tongue has changed since living in Finland and being surrounded by a language which sounds, and is spoken, in a very different way to English. The story outlines a strong bodily reaction, I now get, in response to the way English is often spoken by native speakers.

I am naturally laconic, so the sparse nature of Finnish communication helps me feel accepted and familiar in my adoptive culture. The style of communication and the way language is used, more so than the actual words, also build familiarity, even though myself and my Finnish friends do not share a mother tongue. My friends and I intuitively understand what silence means and we rarely fill those silences for the sake of escaping it. If I ask a question and do not get a response within two seconds, I understand that my friend is not ignoring me, but considering their answer fully before speaking. It is these seemingly insignificant non verbal similarities which have engendered a sense of home within Finland.

10 Story taken from my personal notebook, 19.05.2016

INTERLUDE II

12.02.2016, 14:38, KINGSFORD SMITH SYDNEY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, AUSTRALIA

"Well, I think we'll hit the frog and toad," Dad says, employing classic Australian rhyming slang ("frog and toad" means "road", so Dad is basically informing me that he and Marie are going to get going).

"Yeah, yeah that's fine," I say.

We walk over to the Departures gate and Marie says, "Stand in front of the Departures sign with your dad and I'll get a photo."

Photos in front of the Departures sign are a bit too tacky and cliché for my liking. They are the kind of thing one sees young school leavers plastering all over Facebook and Instagram, announcing to the world that they are going overseas for the first time. I am suddenly shy and a bit embarrassed. I do not want anyone thinking this is my first time travelling outside of Australia.

"Is this necessary?" I ask Marie, "I mean, this is only the fourth time I've left Australia in recent history."

"Yeah!" She replies eagerly, "I like collecting departure photos. I've got a few of you, some of Aim and Bec, some of Pat and Tom, none of Drew and a really nice one of Soph and Lachie."¹¹

I do not protest any further. I smile, she takes the photo and my momentary embarrassment subsides.

Now it is time for the real goodbyes. I hug my dad and Marie and exchange the prerequisite "I love yous". Dad tears up (he always does) but to my surprise, so does Marie. This niggles at me a little and a few tears spring to my eyes. However, I do not indulge them. Instead, I wave once more and disappear through the Departures gate. On the other side I let my eyes well for a second and then wipe the unspilled tears away.

"So, I'm doing this leaving thing again," I think to myself, "I wonder if it ever gets easier?" I walk to border security trying not to think about how long it will be before I see my family again. Glad and smiling that, at least this time, I am actually looking forward to going back to Helsinki.

11 Amy, Rebecca, Patrick, Andrew, Lachlan, Thomas and Sophie are my siblings (they all have nicknames)

INTERPRETATION - HOME AS

In this chapter I analyze the data I have created (the embroidered pieces and embodied stories) in order to articulate what constitutes home, for me, and how I home myself. Now that my study is coming to an end and I have had half a year (since returning from Australia) to sift through, organise and process my data, thoughts and realisations, I have begun trying to answer questions such as: where is home? How does one feel at home? Is it possible to identify with multiple places as home, and is home practiced in the same way in each different location? And ultimately my research question, “How does one create a sense of home in multiple and different places and cultures?”

When sifting through all my data I noticed that my embodied stories and embroidered works fell primarily into one of three categories. They were either in-the-moment experiences where the sensory was paramount, written from significant memories which flew to mind upon thinking about home or related to the way I communicate with people primarily in Finland and Australia. Thus, I have organised the analysis in this chapter into these three categories: *home as sensory experience*, *home as memories* and *home as communicative experience*, as they represent, what I have identified to be, the ways in which I foster a sense of home.

My experience of home and how I relate to Helsinki as home and Newcastle as home has warped, changed and evolved during my time spent in both places and cultures. As mentioned in the introduction, during December 2015 and February 2016, I spent time in Australia and my hometown of Newcastle (for the first time since October 2013). Having the opportunity to travel to Australia, during my research writing time, and immerse myself in the experience of being there, impacted upon my analysis and understanding of how I home myself in both Finnish and Australian contexts.

Throughout this thesis there is a sense of a timeline. However, I am not sure if timeline is the best way to describe the way time has affected my research and subsequent analysis, because line implies linearity and I do not think this thesis progresses chronologically, along a standard linear timeline, as previously explained via Husserl (as cited in Brough, 2002) and Badiou and Heidegger’s (as cited in Barker, 2002) theories on time and time consciousness. Having said that, it would surely be remiss of me not to acknowledge that my thoughts, feelings, attitudes and preliminary research findings about home altered and in some cases distorted, due to the fact that I physically spent time in Australia right in the middle of my thesis writing. The existence of a timeline may not be very apparent within this chapter, as my analysis is organised thematically. But when analysing my data and drawing conclusions about what and where home is, the idea that there are definite periods of time: before, during and after, my most recent trip to Australia, influence my understanding and interpretation of this research.

When I started researching for this thesis, spring 2015, I hypothesised my ultimate findings to be that Finland and Australia

feel equally like home (whereas Manchester and Stockholm never felt like home) and I exist in an in-between space (Suominen, 2013), forever negotiating where I fit and where I am most familiar and comfortable. At this point, I had not visited Newcastle since October 2013 and I had not spent more than five weeks in my hometown since moving away in September 2009. So really, I had no true idea of what life in Australia would feel like, I just assumed that because it was always enjoyable to visit and emotionally difficult to leave again; coupled with the fact that Newcastle was home for 23 years, that it would always occupy a place of relevance and significance within my life and also how I identify home. Distance from my mother country and hometown, did not provide perspective or clarity, but rather a possible inflation of the significance of Newcastle as home.

December 2015 until February 2016 encompassed eight weeks in Australia and the longest stretch of time I had spent there since originally leaving, and this experience altered my tentative hypothesis. Whilst in Newcastle I came to the conclusion that it was not possible for me to just slot back into life there, as if no time had passed. Which ties back into Boym's theory that nostalgia is more a temporal experience than a spatial one (2007), as I was unable to adequately match my expectations for being back in Newcastle with the reality of the experience. I expected my return to a particular place to yield certain feelings, without taking into account the shift in time. There were still many aspects of my hometown that were familiar and provided comfort, but it did not feel like an instant home and I had to admit to myself that maybe it is not possible to feel equally familiar and at home in multiple places.

Since originally leaving Australia I have had an uneasy relationship with the concept of home. A constant oscillating between identification with the states of home and away exists. Therefore, in order to understand how I home myself and how I feel at home, I must first understand what home, as a concept, means to me. Thus, laid out in the following sections, and keeping with the categories already defined above, are the ways in which I interpret and relate to the idea of home.

HOME AS SENSORY EXPERIENCE

Korwin-Kossakowski (2013) states that, she believes, the concept of home plays a key role in the development of people's sense of themselves and their sense of belonging to a place. However, not only in the structure of their private dwellings but also in a deep-seated familiarity with the environment and sensual surroundings (Korwin-Kossakowski, 2013). She expands on this further by saying:

In relocating from one place to another it is usually the intangible elements that we miss the most. It is precisely the

space and the relationship we had with it that is lost. Our sense of self that developed from interacting with the environment, our intimate and sometimes unconscious understandings of the light, smells, tastes, sounds and the perception of our familiar space that leaves one feeling bare and alone in a foreign environment. (p. 6).

Trinh T. Minh-ha in her book *Elsewhere, within here* (2011) echoes Korwin-Kossakowski's thoughts in regards to the links between sensory experience, familiarity and home. At the beginning of the chapter *Far away, from home: the comma between* she describes how when she first moved to the United States from Vietnam in 1970, she could not sleep for several months. Unable to figure out why, it was not until the peaceful silence of a sleeping American city was broken by distant gun fire, that she realised her ears and body (in general) were not accustomed to the silence of peace. She writes:

Home and abroad are sometimes intuitively determined according to the light of the sky on location, other times by the taste of native water, or by the smell of the environment, and other times yet, by the nature of the surrounding silence. (p. 12).

Korwin-Kossakowski and Minh-ha's understanding and experience of home certainly echo parts of my own experience and journey. After leaving Newcastle the realisation that I missed the beach came as a complete surprise. Having spent my entire life in Australia I took for granted certain sounds, sights and feelings. I had not previously been consciously aware that sensual experience was something that human beings developed a relationship with, something we carry with us, something that shapes who we are and our sense of belonging. I have come to realise though, since being away, that a part of how I home myself is via my proximity to bodies of water (preferably salty), beaches and the sensory experience this closeness provides. I do not feel comfortable if I do not live in a city with a coastline, because I grew up living by the beach and the weightlessness of floating in deep water, the sound of waves crashing and the smell of salt and seaweed all inspire a sense of total calm within me.

The relationship between myself, salty water and the ensuing sense of familiarity was discovered directly through the *Pipe* and *Salt & Sun* embodied stories and embroideries and indirectly through the *And the sun shone on the yellowing leaves* story and embroidery. The calmness I experienced whilst embroidering and writing *Pipe* lead me to discern that beaches and coastlines provide important physical and sensory aspects that I need to connect with in order to foster familiarity. The fact that the *Pipe* works explore this need and connection from when I was a teenager, enabled me to deduce that I have, likely, been subconsciously homing myself via sensory experiences since a young age, not only in the years I have lived abroad. Which ties into Boesch (as

cited in Kraft Alsop, 2005) and Kraft Alsop's (2005) hypothesis that home is constituted in childhood.

The insights gained into the relationship between sensory experience and home while working on the *Salt & Sun* works came about a little differently than with *Pipe*. As mentioned in the previous chapter, *Salt & Sun*, the story and embroidered piece, were inspired by a much more recent and direct embodied experience of swimming in the Pacific ocean. The euphoria I felt during the swim came back to me whenever I worked on the embroidery or writing. I surmised that a consistently strong emotional reaction to the swim and memory of it, must indicate a link between the sensory nature of the experience, the feeling of joy and home. Heller (1995) draws similar conclusions between certain feelings and their relationship to home saying, "The sense that we are at home is not simply a feeling but an emotional disposition [...] that accounts for the presence of many particular kinds of emotions like: joy [...] and absence of others" (p. 5).

I experienced discomfort due to the lack of beaches when I lived in Manchester, England (September 2009 - January 2011). The city became claustrophobic and oppressive. There was nowhere to escape to and no indication that the earth ever ended. I felt disconnected from my understanding of cities and their sensual surroundings. I felt disconnected from a part of myself and thus disconnected from home.

Even though the Baltic sea (the body of water forming the coastline with Helsinki) is one of the least salinated seas in the world, as well as being comparatively calm and littered with islands and archipelagos, it still allows a sense of familiarity to thrive within me. This familiarity is tied up with sensory and embodied experience and memories that seem to exist within the body. Rock-hopping from rock to rock until I find one large enough to sit on and settle down to watch the late summer sun cast pink and orange hues all over the water from Arabianranta to Kulosaari¹²; transports me, via the visual experience as well as the physical movement of the body, to Newcastle and all the times I have executed similar rock-hopping off the back of the Merewether baths or along the rock platform between Bar Beach and Susan Gilmore beach¹³.

I became aware of the link between familiarity, sensory experience and bodily memories while creating the embodied story and embroidery *And the sun shone on the yellowing leaves*. As I reflected on the forest walk and wrote the story, I realised how the feeling of cold feet triggered a flood of familiar sensory memories about the beach and wet sand and, in turn, engendered a new feeling of familiarity with the forest and its cold ground.

12 Neighbourhoods in Helsinki

13 Beaches and bathing areas in Newcastle

HOME AS MEMORIES

In the paper *Home and the place of memory* (2009) Malpas and Miller suggest that memory is in fact the key to creating both a sense of self and a sense of home. Explaining that:

The connection of personal memory to remembered place means that the memories that are important to our sense of self will always be memories that bring certain places with them, that are held in that place, and in relation to which we are thereby also ourselves placed. (p. 38).

Keeping in mind the link between memory, self and home, it seems almost uncanny that I began this exploration of my relationship with home by (seemingly) intuitively examining, writing about and living inside memories from Australia. At first I began looking for traces of home within the memories which instantly materialised in my mind. What did these memories have to say about how I relate to Australia as home? Where was home then, where is it now and how has my relationship to home changed? I came to realise that my relationship with home is constantly shifting and evolving. For the first two years, after I had left Australia, home was undeniably Newcastle and the house where I grew up, my family and friends and the familiarity of a country, a city, a life I had spent 23 years inside. But, since my mother sold my childhood house, my father no longer lives near the beach, my younger brother and sister appropriated my important material possessions and my closest friends moved to other cities, it has dawned on me that the home I miss, when I think of Australia, no longer exists.

When I miss home I miss lazy, idyllic days by the beach in our tumbledown cottage with my many brothers and sisters. I miss being fifteen and having no sense of responsibility and going body-surfing late in the afternoon (even though this is prime shark attack time). I miss getting drunk with my brothers and sisters because my family is some of the best company I can have. In reality though, home is not like this on a day to day basis as life in Newcastle has evolved and moved on without me. So, what I am really longing for is an idealized version of home. An amalgamation of all my best memories rolled into one place. A home that, forever more, can only exist in memories, steeped in nostalgia (Kraft Alsop, 2005).

This is a sentiment and perspective echoed by Malpas and Miller, who write:

The turn back toward home also leads to a conceptualisation of home that, precisely because it is a home constituted in memory, is also a home constituted only in imagination and so a home that is all too often romanticised and illusory.” (p. 41).

I became conscious of the notion of home as a romantic ideal, fuelled by personal memories, through the process of creating the *Daydreaming* and *Lords of Dogtown* works. Both pairs of writing and embroidery explore different facets of my idealised version of home. Via the writing of *Daydreaming* I was able to identify Dad and Marie's garden as being a central feature in many of my memories about Newcastle. Whether or not I actually spent a lot of time in that garden is irrelevant; I remember it so fondly that it has taken on a fantasy like quality. That garden is not home and is not how I home myself, but the memory of it contributes to the ways I feel familiarity in Newcastle.

In light of this point, I cannot help but wonder if it is more likely that no specific place is home? And if, instead, home is made up of a collection of memories from places, spun together to create a perfect middle ground where I always feel familiar and comfortable. However, this kind of thinking, cautions Boym (2007), can confuse the actual home and the imaginary one.

My ability to feel moments of contentment, whether in Helsinki or Newcastle (or discontentment in Manchester and Stockholm), suggest however, that the way I home myself is not entirely through memories. Sensory experience, for example, is strongly reliant upon being bodily present, about connecting to certain sounds, sights, smells etc. in a particular place. The two categories are not wholly separable however, as sensual experiences frequently trigger specific memories and memories are often formed and cemented around embodied happenings. I became aware of the interplay between sensory moments and memory while writing and embroidering the *Lords of Dogtown* works. As previously mentioned, the sound of skating prompted strong memories about my siblings and in particular Lachie and Tom. I then realised that memories of significant people could be idealised as well.

In the article *Nostalgia and its discontents* (2007) Boym discusses nostalgia primarily in terms of place and time, but could it be possible to experience nostalgia in terms of people and personal relationships as well? Or is this simply a temporal nostalgia i.e. longing to return to a particular time where a relationship is perceived to be particularly special. Either way, through the creation of the *Lords of Dogtown* story and embroidered piece, I understood that it is not only places that can be idealised and romanticised by memory, but people too.

HOME AS SHARED COMMUNICATIVE EXPERIENCE

Significant memories and meaningful sensuous experiences are not the only ways I, and many others, home ourselves. In her article Agnes Heller (1995) defines familiarity as the most decisive constituent of the feeling of being at home. She then

goes on to explain that the familiar contains a very human component, one that is closely linked to community and communication and takes into account: mother tongue, local lingo, nursery rhymes, gestures, signs, facial expressions and minute customs (Heller, 1995). I can relate to Heller's idea that familiarity is comprised of human shared experience and its related phenomena, especially shared communication styles, as the embodied story and embroidery *Please, stop talking* investigates this relationship. *Please, stop talking*, especially the embroidery work, provided a way for me to finally conceptualise the role communication plays in the building of familiarity within different cultural contexts. Below I explain what aspect of shared communicative experience helps to engender a sense of home in Finland and Australia. The journal entries help to illustrate the findings which surfaced while working on the *Please, stop talking* works.

08.01.2016, 20:06, 150 BRUCE STREET, AUSTRALIA

I'm sitting in the livingroom on the impossibly comfortable British-racing green armchair, reading *Steppenwolf* by Hermann Hesse and listening to the National on vinyl. It's a Friday night and I am feeling pretty content with myself and the world. My phone rings, it's Mum:

"Hey Mum. What's up?"

"Hi Gracie. Nothing. Just seeing what you're up to?"

"I'm just at Soph's reading and listening to records."

"It's a Friday night! Are you okay?"

"Yeah of course. Why wouldn't I be?"

"Well...cause you're on your own on a Friday. Aren't you lonely? I don't want you to be alone. You've travelled all the way home, I don't want you to be sad and by yourself."

I sigh exasperatedly, "Mum I'm fine! I like being by myself."

"Well okay, as long as you aren't sad or lonely."

"I'm neither."

"Alright. I'll call you tomorrow. Love you."

"Okay. Love you too."

I hang up the phone and shake my head in disbelief with an amused smirk on my face. I go back to reading but am quickly disturbed by a text message. It's from my sister, it reads:

"Heeeey Gracie wut r u up to?"

I reply, "Nothing much. Reading and listening to records."

I pick *Steppenwolf* back up just as I receive another text from Soph. A little exaggeratedly I place the book back down again and attend to the text, which reads,

"On a Fri nite? U ok?"

"I AM FINE!" I say a little too loudly to no one in particular. The fact that my family seems to equate solitude with sadness and loneliness irks me, but I try to bite my tongue and reply to Soph with an even temper,

"Yeah, yeah, I'm fine. Just don't have plans."

I switch my phone to silent mode and throw it back into my bedroom, but I do not hear any further from Mum or Soph. I spend the remainder of the evening voraciously consuming *Steppenwolf* and Soph and Aaron's¹⁴ record collection.

Within Finland, even though I do not adequately speak the local language and do not share a mother tongue with my Finnish friends, I feel an intuitive connection which transcends any language barriers. Perhaps I can call it a cultural connection? But, this sounds too clinical in order to properly express, what it is about my Finnish friends and life in Helsinki, which suits me so well. I feel comfortable and familiar inside the silence, inside the introspection and introvertedness, inside the acceptance of solitude and aloofness. I cling lovingly to the fact that no one tells me to smile more or talk more or be more outgoing. I enjoy the mutual understanding and striving toward blunt and direct communication.

Minh-ha (2011) wrote about how the silence of peace unnerved her after she first moved to the United States (from war torn Vietnam) but she also writes about the lack of silence, as a communicative tool within American culture, and how she did not realise she had missed such silences until she spent time in Senegal and, once again, experienced a culture where silence is purposeful and important:

With many years spent in the States before going to Africa, I had almost forgotten and given up the importance of

9 Aaron is my sister Sophie's boyfriend.

the role of silence in Asian communicative contexts, and had come to accept that silence could not be communicated unless it was a collective, timely produced silence. To my great delight and surprise, however, people there (Senegal) knew how to listen to my silences in all complexities and subtleties, and I learned that this mute language could be effectively shared. *In their silences, I returned home.* (p. 12).

Through the process of researching for this thesis (namely creating the *Please, stop talking* story and embroidery) one of the discoveries I have made is that the nonverbal aspects of communication with my Finnish friends allow me to feel at home. The lack of common mother tongue does not seem to matter. Sometimes I alter my English in order for verbal communication to flow and sometimes they alter their Finnish, but the fact that we understand each other's silences is more important than most of the things we say out loud. Heller concurs with the idea that comfortable silence equates a feeling of home saying, "Where silence is not threatening we certainly are at home" (1995, p. 5).

Silence as a hallmark of home is in stark contrast with the shared communicative experience which helps me feel at home in Australia. My human connection there is much more conscious and verbal and is very much linked to mother tongue, local lingo and inside jokes. When I am in my hometown I can speak in a way I cannot speak with any of my friends in Helsinki. In Finland I do not drastically alter my speech on a day to day basis, but even after five years there are certain words that even my closest Finnish friends do not understand. Words that belong to a very different vernacular, one shaped by the East Coast of Australia, with its beaches and its surf culture. I would not describe the familiarity I feel with Australia and Australian culture as quiet or intuitive. It is very much based on explicit communication and the ability to effortlessly interpret and comprehend local speech patterns.

07.02.2016, 16:17, ALDI SUPERMARKET, AUSTRALIA

Soph jumps into the driver's seat, slams the door closed and then begins laughing hysterically.

"What?" I ask, really curious as to what is suddenly so funny.

She takes a minute to calm down before answering, "Just then, as I was waiting in line at the checkout, this woman walked past and I heard her say 'Oi, I'm fangin' for some sugar eh!'"

I stare blankly at Soph for half a second and then blink a few times in disbelief before dissolving into fits of laughter.

Soph starts the ute¹⁵, still chuckling, and I finally manage to say, "For real? You actually heard some woman say the sentence 'Oi, I'm fangin' for some sugar eh?'"

"Yep," Soph confirms, smiling broadly at the memory.

"That's fucking horrible!" I say and laugh, once again, through my nose.

"Pretty much," Soph concurs.

"But what does *fangin'* even mean in this context?" I ask, suddenly serious, because I realise that while I automatically understand the woman's sentence, her use of the slang *fangin'* is ambiguous.

"I mean," I continue, "Is she absolutely high-tailing it toward the lollies and chocolate aisle, or is she suffering from really intense sugar cravings? Cause, while I understand the use of *fangin'* in the latter context, I've not heard it used that way before."

"Yeah...she means she's craving sugar," Soph answers, "It's becoming more and more popular lately to use *fangin'* in that way - to mean you're really hanging out for something, bad."

"Still," I reiterate, "What the fuck?" and we both collapse once more into quiet laughter.

My sister Sophie always tells me that speaking to me is like speaking into a time warp from 2009. That I use old slang and old turns of phrase that have since disappeared. This is of course true, but the fact that my sister will still always understand what I am talking about and I will always be able to deduce what new Australian slang and idioms mean, makes direct, verbal communication an important part of how I experience a sense of home in Newcastle and Australia.

The above sections analyse the three main ingredients I have identified as being key to the way I, and potentially countless others, foster the feeling of home. A combination of these three elements need to be present in order for adequate familiarity and in turn a sense of home to be felt. While I have lived in four different cities (Newcastle, Manchester, Helsinki and Stockholm), only in Newcastle and Helsinki do I feel at home due to a combination of: sensory experience, significant memories and shared communicative experience.

If I can now revisit the *Theory* chapter for a moment and in particular the scepticism I voiced in regards to Heller's (1995) idea that spatial and temporal home experiences cannot be transferred. The three categories, previously outlined, that I have identified as how I define home, all blend, in my opinion, aspects of the spatial and temporal. For example, in the case of home as sensory experience, the fact that sensual encounters can elicit memories from the body show that one can simultaneously have a spatial and temporal home experience. In her article *Where are we at home?* Heller does say, "Spatial home experiences about familiar fragrances, sounds and things. We carry them in our memory, it is to them that we return" (1995, p. 14). Does

the act of returning to a specific place and its familiar characteristics, not bodily, but through memory, not imply both a spatial element, via what was once an in situ experience, and a temporal element in that the act of remembering is not tied to that specific place but can be accessed at any point in time?

The occurrence of shared communicative experience, I believe, also blends together spatial and temporal home experiences. While mother tongue and nonverbal nuances of communication are not specifically tied to any particular place, characteristics of language such as slang are shaped and influenced by the people and culture of a specific country or city. While it is possible to feel accepted and at home via communicative experience with people all over the world, it needs to be acknowledged, in my opinion, that vernacular does not develop in a vacuum, it is dependent upon place. My research presents a definition, albeit a personal one, of home which muddles the boundaries between spatial and temporal home experience.

I can honestly conclude that I do not think, for some of us, there will ever be a satisfactory answer to the question, “Where is home?” But I am now considerably more cognizant of some of the possible components of familiarity and how they can work together to create a feeling of home in different places and cultures. For me the combination and overlap of: sensory experiences, significant personal memories and shared communicative experiences allow me to feel at home in both Newcastle and Helsinki. However, I do not feel at home in the same way in both places. In Newcastle the feeling of familiarity comes largely from the mixing of sensory experience with significant memories with a little of shared communicative experience thrown in. While in Helsinki the same feeling is generated primarily by shared communicative experience with some sensory experience and only traces of significant personal memories. However, my sense of home is not equal in both cities. As previously mentioned, while in Newcastle, I became aware of the fact that it was not possible to slip seamlessly back into life there, after being away for so many years. There was too much of a dissonance between my memories of life in Newcastle and the actual reality of being back. While the city and the way of life there felt extremely familiar, like a well worn sweater, it was not completely comfortable. It was as if the sweater had shrunk slightly and did not quite fit anymore. Returning to Helsinki felt natural, and actually I had missed the city and my life within it. There was no dissonance. Day-to-day lived experience has a lot to do with Helsinki, currently, feeling more authentically home than Newcastle, because the ways I feel at home here are more to do with immediate experience without the influence of time and distance.

CONCLUSION

In this final chapter I discuss the findings from my interpretations, especially in relation to how home, in my understanding is more than a physical place imbued with significant lived experiences. I also acknowledge the bias of my own perspective and personal experience, as someone who has moved around and lived in four different countries throughout the last seven years, home as a physical place would be rather counterintuitive to my lifestyle. I also reflect on the methodologies I used throughout this research project, especially the autoethnography and whether or not I believe I successfully conducted autoethnographic research. The value of my specific research methods to others is considered as well. Finally, I explore what my research implies for my future, as well as the future of other researchers.

As discussed in the previous chapter, I have identified three main ways which I use to home myself. In order to create a feeling of home aspects of sensory experience, significant memories and shared communicative experience need to be present and intermingling. As a result of these findings, it would seem that the way I, for example, create a sense of home within different places and cultures, is through a mixture of spatial and temporal home experiences. Home is not inherently a physical place, nor is it entirely disembodied from place. This understanding of home is supported by Ida Wentzel Winther who agrees that, “Home is a tangible place but also a movable feeling, an idea and a mental condition” (2009, p. 58). For some the idea that home is not entirely tied up with place of birth or residence may be difficult to fathom, while for others the idea that home is at all situated in place may be just as unbelievable.

A nomadic lifestyle is characterised by movement and not settlement (Juutunen, Kalčić & Rogela, 2014). Taking into account the fact that I have moved between Australia, England, Finland and Sweden within the last seven years, it is possible to label my life as nomadic. However, due to the fact that I have had a postal address as well as a residence permit and have identified as *living* in Finland consistently for the last five years, adds a degree of settlement to my situation. I am mindful of my half nomadic subject position and the bias it has created within this research project. In that, my lived experience of movement, relocation and travel influenced the point from which I tackled this thesis. I acknowledge that if I had stayed in Australia, or even England, my findings in regards to how I create a sense of home would be entirely different. Perhaps they would be much more dependent upon physical place and situated lived experiences? Perhaps I would not even have embarked upon this research project as the topic of home would not create tension within me and thus not be relevant to my interests.

I also recognise that, as outlined in the *Theory* chapter, the phenomenological approach of this thesis has generated a more individual research outcome, as the phenomenon I chose to investigate (home) is shaped by me (the researcher) through my understanding and my lived experiences (Kallio-Tavin, 2013). As a result of this personalised approach, I understand that this

thesis and my research findings will not be relevant and will not resonate with everyone.

As I discussed and defined in the *Theory* chapter, widespread global movement is becoming more common and accessible, giving rise to a group of highly mobile and privileged contemporary nomads. People who take advantage of cheap airfares to travel freely and not for survival, but for networking or leisure (Rodda, 2015). It is this group of people, or other privileged people who relocate or move frequently by choice, I believe will relate most to my research findings.

As I explained in the *Methodology* chapter one of the methods I used to gather and create data for this research project was autoethnography. I chose to work with autoethnography because as a genre it blends ethnographic interests with writing about life (Roth, 2005), and as a result autoethnographers, are supposed to, create stories that are as much a reflection of their own social and cultural positioning as much as they are commentary on the position of others (Roth, 2005). However, it is my opinion that I need to be sceptical and critical of my autoethnographic approach as I am not convinced that I fully achieved authentic autoethnographic research. While I did identify a wider social and cultural phenomenon to investigate: namely home and how people create a sense of home within multiple places and cultures. And I also “zoomed in” on my own personal experience of the phenomenon and used this as the base of my research. I do not believe, ultimately, that my research findings are applicable enough to a wider subset of society. I do not believe my thesis offers, as Roth (2005) states, adequate commentary into the position of others. While my research may be rather interesting or pertinent to other young, affluent, somewhat nomadic expatriots, this is quite a specific niche.

Even though I am critical of the wider applicability of my research, I do believe it can still be purposeful to myself and others. In the context of myself this research project was useful in that it enabled a clear insight into the process I undertake in order to create a sense of home within both my native and adoptive countries and cultures.

Apart from allowing me to fully comprehend the three primary ways I feel a sense of familiarity and in turn home, my study also provides pathways into understanding and relating to the varied backgrounds of, not only individuals I already study and associate with, but also those who I may encounter in my future profession, education or personal life.

On a very practical level, working with methodologies such as embodied writing and embroidery, presented me with the opportunity to practise and improve technical skills whilst conducting research. Considering working within the creative nonfiction genre is something I would like to pursue in the future, this research project was a suitable launching point from which to

study and build confidence with the genre. Further academic study is another avenue I would also, potentially, like to follow, so in the same vein, working on this thesis project provided a glimpse into the process of academic researching and writing.

Finally, my research findings, even though they pertain predominantly to my life and my individual journey, have the potential to be relevant to other people who have experienced phenomena such as: nomadic lifestyle, migration, diaspora, displacement or long term travel. This is due to the fact that home will always be an individual and unique human experience. No two people are ever going to identify and relate to home in exactly the same way. But by reading accounts of how others create a feeling of home we may become better equipped at identifying how we also home ourselves, and in a world where movement, mobility, travel, immigration, refugeeism and nomadism are becoming the norm, I think it is extremely important to understand the multitude of ways home is created, experienced, felt and lived.

POSTLUDE

13.02.2016, 06:40, HELSINKI-VANTAA AIRPORT, FINLAND

The sky, through the long corridor of windows, is pallid and grey, like weak, milky tea. And at six-thirty in the morning, there is at least two more hours until the sun rises. Why are planes from the Southern Hemisphere always scheduled to arrive in the early morning? Into the somnolent, lazy darkness; such a contrast with the decisive and energetic dawn of the East coast of Australia.

It is snowing! And not just small, wet, nothing flakes, but big, substantial, stick-to-the-ground-and-pile-up ones. I am so happy to have returned in time for some winter.

I smile as I watch a group of tourists from Singapore take photos of the snow. Or am I smiling because I am back? Back in a place I have missed. Back in a place I have, recently, come to realise I belong.

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